

Redrage: Niki Eliot fronts Huggy Bear performing "Her Jazz" on *The Word*



ELIOT: Being on *The Word* and with all the fuss that broke out afterwards meant a lot of people came to the shows just expecting to see a fight every night.

NAYLOR: It was frightening, violent and misogynistic. Huggy Bear got a lot of abuse, hatred and vitriol. It's like a weird cultural thing in the English DNA to be fucking arseholes.

ELIOT: It was so hard with the fights and chaos. But seeing Bikini Kill play live so passionately every night was one of the most amazing experiences.

WALKER: I always wanted to work with music that has a point to it. Moving the needle of culture in some way, however small. The girl-boy revolution was a positive statement. It was meant to counteract what they were seeing in British musical culture but also political culture, how we lead our lives and interact as people. There are a lot of themselves in that song, but it's not

just about music, it's about gaining your own ground and your own community. **NAYLOR:** They were throwing words around like 'queer'. That way they played with gender hasn't dated.

ROWLEY: I'm loath to use a word like pride but I do feel like we wedged open a space for a while. Opened a portal to get the real freaks and weirdos, the shy and unsure, the gentle and kind but sidelined, the serious but maligned, through the door into the open to meet, create, plan, think about what makes life not just better now but in the future.

WALKER: Chris has put a book together. They hadn't spoken for a while, but this brought them together.

ROWLEY: It is called *Killed Of Kids* by Ethan Swan. It started as a find in a shed in my garden of fanzines, flyers, posters, letters and pictures. Ethan wanted to put it out. He contacted me to initiate the project from America – we were received better there and fit in more purposefully. It's coming out in the autumn. All the others have done stuff for it, too.

JOHNSON: What "Her Jazz" means for me now is less about the music and more about the resonance it had with people at the time. It stretched way beyond our small audience and influence and hopefully changed some of the conversations people were having. It doesn't belong entirely to us – it was the sound of that moment in time and the community we were a part of. **Q**

put my logo on it. I was kind of joking, but I wasn't. The environment around the idea of a feminist pop group was pretty hostile. *NME* was very aggressive. *Melody Maker* was a bit more positive. But one thing I loved about "Her Jazz" was it says to the press that you aren't the arbiter of this movement in music.

SLADE: I felt it was a riot grrrl theme tune. We had the Bikini Kill tour coming up and it was like a rallying call to women. Bikini Kill had "Rebel Girl" and we had "Her Jazz".

JOHNSON: Lyrically, "Her Jazz" was decipherable enough for the tabloidesque music press of the day to digest and spit out, whereas we usually irritated or baffled them. This isn't meant to diminish "Her Jazz", its clarity makes it powerful, thrilling and uncompromising and I'm proud of it and everyone involved.

WALKER: Getting on *The Word* was a goal because it felt achievable and meant we could be in people's living rooms.

NAYLOR: Huggy Bear took a lot of persuading, but I told them it would be an important historical moment. It was, in a way. It was fucking amazing, with Niki in that weird red wig. That performance captures them better than anything that exists. The colours and camera angles were hyper intense.

ELIOT: The wig was an off-the-cuff decision. I bought it on the day of filming. I woke up feeling panicked... feeling in my guts it could be a mistake but knowing we were doing it to promote our tour with Bikini Kill. I chose orangey red over blonde or black because it reminded me of

FACT FILE

Written by: Huggy Bear
Label: Wiiiija/Catcall
Recorded at: Granny's Studio, London
Produced by: Ian Shaw
Released: Feb 1993
Personnel: Niki Eliot (vocals, bass), Jo Johnson (guitar), Jon Slade (guitar), Chris Rowley (vocals, percussion), Karen Hill (drums)
Chart position: UK -: US -

David Bowie and Johnny Rotten and thought it might give me secret confidence. Why didn't anyone stop me?!

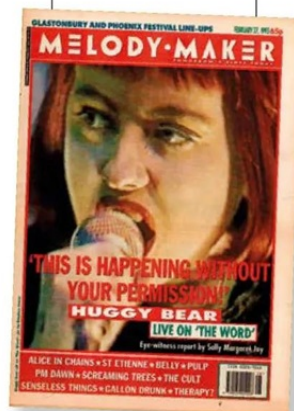
WALKER: If you look at the audience you can see Ben, Tjinder and Avtar from Cornershop dancing at the front. I remember Liz saying something like, "Let's get this started." We didn't know those models would be on, but it was a great opportunity to intervene and make it more than a music performance. You only have those opportunities once in your lifetime.

ELIOT: I'm sure that we had no intention of making any statement or causing a ruckus. There was no plan to do anything other than play our song and get out.

NAYLOR: *The Word* was a very cynical programme and that wasn't their finest moment. I had to write a grovelling letter of apology afterwards.

WALKER: Jo Whaley, who used to book bands on *The Word*, said her bosses were upset. But a few days later, when it was on the cover of *Melody Maker*, they were over the moon.

ROWLEY: It was extremely painful for a while. Not dealing with the press per se but trying to maintain what amounted to our mission – three years from the very conception of the band to do as much that was relevant or fun and not get tired or weighed down by irrelevances and flotsam. We're only human and we could only do so much against so much hostility. It amounted to unwarranted spiteful bullying.



TIME LINE

1991 Huggy Bear form in London. Release their first single, "Rubbing The Impossible To Burst", on Wiiiija in 1992.

February 14, 1993 Release "Her Jazz", perform the

track on *The Word* and are ejected from the studio after heckling presenter Terry Christian.

February 27, 1993 Huggy Bear appear on front of *Melody Maker* following

The Word appearance, helping "Her Jazz" reach No 1 in the indie charts, eventually selling 8,000.

March 3, 1993 Begin tour with Bikini Kill at Conway Hall in London. Release

split album on Liz Naylor's Catcall label with Bikini Kill, *Our Troubled Youth/Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah*.

September 1993 "Her Jazz" compiled alongside other Granny's Studio

releases by Kill Rock Stars on *Taking The Rough With The Smoother*.

November 21, 1994 Release *Weaponry Listens To Love* LP before splitting up.